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Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*) Tracked by Satellite Telemetry from Louisiana to Nesting Beach at Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico

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The Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) is considered the most endangered sea turtle in the world (Groombridge, 1982; Shaver, 1991; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1992). It is distributed throughout the Gulf of Mexico (Liner, 1954; Carr, 1957; Carr, 1980; Hildebrand, 1982; Manzella and Williams, 1992), but is most abundant in coastal waters from Texas to Florida (Ogren, 1989). It also occurs along the eastern shore of North America to Newfoundland and has been reported in the European Atlantic near the British Isles, Netherlands, and France (Pritchard, 1989). Despite this widespread distribution, almost all nesting occurs on about a 60 km stretch of beach near Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

An adult female Kemp's ridley was tracked from Cameron, Louisiana to Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico by satellite telemetry for 287 days from 13 August 1994 through 16 May 1995. The turtle measured 65.8 cm straight carapace length, 64.9 cm straight carapace width, and weighed 42.6 kg. The turtle was captured at Cameron, Louisiana in a 91.5 m turtle entanglement net (7.3 m deep, 12.7 cm bar mesh) by Texas A&M University biologists. It was fitted with a Telonics ST-10 satellite transmitter on 13 August 1994 and tracked by National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service Galveston Laboratory. It moved offshore of the upper Texas coast in late November 1994 and travelled south along the Texas coast into Mexican waters through early January 1995 (Fig. 1). It was offshore of the Rancho Nuevo nesting beach by 10 March 1995. It moved an additional 100 km to the south before returning to nest on 23 April 1995 and again on 19 May 1995, both nestings being recorded by Rancho

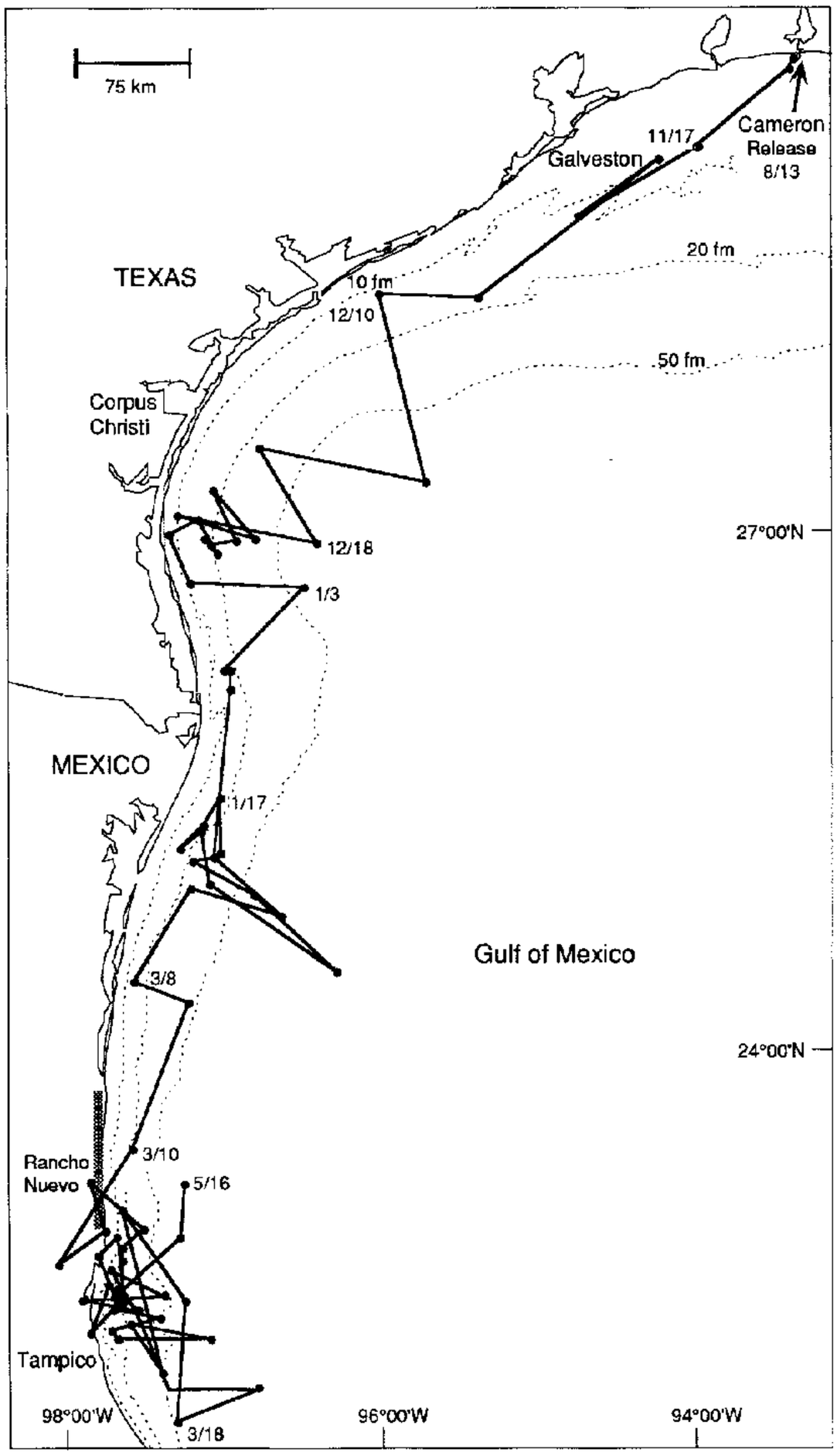

Figure 1. Movement (solid line) of satellite-tracked Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) from Cameron, Louisiana to Rancho Nuevo, Mexico from 13 August 1994 to 16 May 1995. Nesting was recorded on 23 April 1995 and 19 May 1995.

Nuevo workers. This is the only time a Kemp's ridley has been remotely tracked to a nesting beach. The satellite transmitter was in its non-transmit mode during the first nesting, and was no longer functional during the second nesting, the last transmission having been recorded just offshore three days earlier on 16 May 1995 (Fig. 1).

A total of 121 eggs were deposited in the first nest; 103 (85%) successfully hatched on 14 June 1995. One hundred twenty-nine eggs were laid in the second nest; 98 (76%) hatchlings emerged from the nest on 5 July 1995.

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